



*The Association of Washington Housing Authorities*

October 9, 2015

Victoria Wachino, Director  
Center for Medicaid and CHIP Services  
Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services  
200 Independence Avenue Southwest  
Washington, DC 20201

**RE: Healthier Washington Initiative's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver Application**

Dear Director Wachino:

On behalf of the Association of Washington Housing Authorities, I am writing in support of the supportive housing benefit proposed in the Healthier Washington Initiative's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application submitted to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services.

Supportive housing is a nationally recognized evidence-based best practice for serving people who are chronically homeless and have serious behavioral and/or physical health disabilities. People who are chronically homeless experience significant health disparities, including high rates of chronic and acute behavioral and physical illnesses, risk of injury, trauma, and exposure from living outside. Many of these individuals do not have regular access to health care and, as a result, impose a disproportionately high cost on public health care systems, due to frequent emergency department utilization, hospitalizations, and high utilization of other public crisis services.

Local and national research has demonstrated that supportive housing is effective in helping people who are chronically homeless access and retain permanent housing and access to health services. Housing stability can lead to other positive outcomes, including better health and improved utilization of health and social services. Crucially, supportive housing programs can result in significant savings to public systems that often exceed the cost of providing supportive housing, saving programs like Medicaid millions of dollars per year.

Washington's Public Housing Authorities provide much-needed services to chronically homeless individuals across the state. And yet while many of our members work closely with local non-profit partners to meet the needs of our state's chronically homeless population, many go unserved. One of the barriers to bringing supportive housing fully to scale in Washington is a shortage of funding for housing-related services. A supportive housing benefit in the state's Medicaid Plan would bring needed resources for supportive housing and help make the expansion of this proven intervention financially feasible.

Thank you for your consideration of Washington's 1115 Medicaid Transformation Waiver application. If implemented, this proposal will create significant health care savings while ensuring

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*Pam Tietz, President*  
*Andy Anderson, Treasurer*

*Duane Leonard, Vice President*  
*Teri Anania, Secretary*

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people with serious disabilities are able to live with security, autonomy and dignity in their own communities.

Sincerely,



Pamela J. Tietz, President